AG.T.T583
c.2

Ag Talk

Volume 2, Issue 3

Summer/Fall
1999

Inside this issue:

"Protecting Your Right to Water" - Alberta's *Water Act* 1

Building Community Support For Your Project 2

Organic Production and Marketing 3

Local Research and Demonstration Trials 4

AFSC Reminder... 4

Fall Residue Management Critical to Direct Seed 5

Announcements 6

Newsletter from the Leduc District Office of

- Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development -
- Agriculture Financial Services Corporation -
- Alberta Reduced Tillage Initiative -
- Alberta Pulse Growers Commission -

4301 - 50 Street
Leduc, AB T9E 7H3

Serving the Counties of Leduc, Strathcona, Wetaskiwin, the M.D. of Brazeau and Beyond!

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Phone: 986-8985 (Toll Free 310-0000)
Fax: 986-1085

Alberta
AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Cindy Bishop... Rural Development Specialist-Organizations
George Rock... Farm Management Specialist
Roger Andreiuk... Cereal & Oilseed Crops Specialist
Bob Buchanan... Agricultural Water Specialist
Leanne Chubocha &
Liz Ross... Client Service Representatives

"Protecting your Right to Water" - Alberta's *Water Act*

By Bob Buchanan, Agricultural Water Specialist, Leduc

Many farmers in the area have heard that Alberta's new *Water Act* came into effect on January 1st this year. Many of you have also asked what is the implication of the new legislation, and what, if anything, do you have to do about it.

One of the key issues the new Act deals with is the protection of agriculture water supplies. The Act protects your water supply by providing two clearly defined categories of water use – the use of water for **household purposes** and the **traditional agriculture use.**

Household use of water is defined under the Act as the use of up to 275,000 gallons of water per year for the purposes of human consumption, sanitation, fire prevention and watering animals, gardens, lawns and trees. If you own or occupy land that has a water source (groundwater is included), and you have a residence on that land, you are entitled to use up to the 275,000 gallon volume limit from a water supply source on that land. The Act ensures this type of use is your statutory right and it takes priority over all other water uses. If you have land and a residence on that land, you automatically have the right to use up to this volume limit of water for your household purposes.

The new category established for the **traditional agriculture use** under the Act applies to water used for raising animals or applying pesticides to crops up to a

Continued on page 2

Continued from page 1

volume of 1.375 million gallons of water per year (about 3,835 gallons per day). If you were using water for these purposes on January 1, 1999, you are now able to apply for a registration of traditional agriculture water use. The registration will protect your water right to use water by assigning you a priority number "grandfathered" back to the date when the water was first put to use. If you decide not to apply for a registration, you may continue the use of water, but such use will not be protected in case of water shortage.

To obtain a registration, an application must be completed and filed with Alberta Environment by December 31, 2001. Information required for the application includes the sources of water supply, the date the water source was first used for raising animals or applying pesticides, and the volume of water being used.

Application forms are available in our local district office. Staff are available to assist you in completing the application form. Since the forms will take about 1/2 hour to complete, we ask that you book an appointment with Leanne Chubocha or Liz Ross. The completed applications will then be sent to Alberta Environment for processing.

Water uses that do not fall within the categories mentioned above, require a licence under the *Water Act*. Licences have and will continue to be required for uses such as large feedlot operations, irrigation uses, as well as municipal and industrial uses.

Water is vital to agriculture operations. Please take some time to learn more about the *Water Act* and how it can best serve to protect your uses of water.



Building Community Support For Your Project

By Cindy Bishop, Rural Development Specialist - Organizations, Leduc

So you want to launch a project or initiative that you feel will benefit the community? How do you think the community will react to the project? What can you do to bring them on side?

It's wise to begin consulting with the community right from the start. Open, honest and timely communication is a prerequisite for building support for the project. Public participation is a communication strategy that has proven to be successful.

Start by identifying individuals and organizations in the community who will be affected by the project. Try to determine what is in their hearts and their heads. What information do these people want and need? What is the perspective of community stakeholders? Who are the people with power and influence? As initiators of the project you must be prepared to listen and respond to the views and concerns expressed by the public.

There are a variety of approaches that are tailor-made of reaching different groups of people. You need to consider *what* information to share, *who* to communicate to and *when*. Consider using a variety of public participation approaches to provide information and receive feedback on your project.

Strategies for Public Participation:

- *Informal Consultation*
 This process allows you to keep in touch with key people, share ideas and informally gather their input over the life of the project. You can "test the waters" by simply talking to people over coffee.
- *Use of the Media*
 You might write articles, pay for advertising, or appoint a spokesperson to convey your message to the media. Build a working relationship with your local media. Know what will capture media interest and give you the coverage you want.
- *Open Houses*
 A convenient, neutral location and a comfortable atmosphere are important.

Continued on page 3

"Open, honest and timely communication is a prerequisite for building support for your project."

Continued from page 2

You could include displays or models of the project, written information, a knowledgeable resource person, and a questionnaire that gives the public a chance to give feedback.

- *Public Forums*
 This is a way of addressing issues that arise once the public is aware of the project. A skilled neutral facilitator can help project representatives and the public clarify issues and have meaningful open discussion.

Building community support for your project is an on-going process. Effective communication is crucial. Be sure to listen and respond to community ideas and concerns. Let the community know where their input has made a difference. Public participation leads to successful and sustainable projects.

Watch for the factsheet *"Building Community Support for Your Project"*, available from our office this fall.

Organic Production and Marketing

By George Rock, Farm Management Specialist, Leduc

The North American organic food industry is estimated to be valued at $3 billion per year and growing at a rate of 25% per year. Some would say, "my agriculture production is all organic and now that I'm growing organic implies that there was something wrong with how I was producing things before". Not necessarily.

Successful entrepreneurs have worked with one basic premise, find a need, and fill it.

A growing number of consumers feel their food supply is compromised by the products being used and they don't trust big business. They are prepared to pay more for production they feel is more natural. If they are prepared to back these feelings with their dollars, then this is one of the needs 'out there' to be filled.

Successful organic production requires strong management skills. Rigid standards, including planning for long-term soil management and detailed record keeping, are needed according to Ted Sakaluk, co-ordinator of farm management programs at the Saskatchewan Institute of Science and Technology. This group is responsible for the production of a new publication by Canadian Farm Business Management Council's (CFBMC) *"Introduction to Certified Organic Farming"*. This group is not advocating all farms should become organic. Conventional farming is needed to keep up with demand and organic farms take time to set up and properly maintain according to Sakaluk. Here are some steps to obtaining organic certification for producers and processors:

- Contact a certifying body in your area and obtain copies of guidebooks, standards, regulations, etc.. Membership with a certifying body is a prerequisite for organic certification.
- Meet the standards and guidelines of the certifying body.
- Develop a comprehensive, clear and accessible record-keeping system (audit trail).

An audit trail is included in record keeping. It is the grower's proof that he or she has used acceptable organic growing practices. The purpose of the audit trail is to trace the product from seed to consumer.

How to get started

Based on the experience of organic farmers, here are a few tips to help you succeed:

- Talk to organic farmers to see how they produce organic products. Learn from other people's successes.
- Start small and plan to increase the size of your operation over a three-to-five year period. Learn as you go and have a plan.
- Determine the market potential and marketing strategies you will use to sell your organic products. Market research is an essential step before growing or producing any commodity.

Continued on page 4



Yes Ma'am You have my personal assurance that we don't use any toxic chemicals or pesticides...

Continued from page 3

- Research organic production methods thoroughly, and explore the various alternative methods. Sources include books, fact sheets and the Internet.
- An Organic Production Resource Centre, developed by the Sustainable Agriculture Association, is housed in the library of the J.G. O'Donoghue Building, 7000-113 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T6H 5T6. Books and articles are available for loan to Association members and others interested in organic production. A bibliography is also available on request, call (780) 427-2104.
- Attend annual meetings of certifying bodies to make contact with other organic farmers and gain from their experience.

The market for certified organic livestock is not as established as plants, but it is growing and offers potential. Much of the interest is from consumer concern regarding antibiotics and hormone usage.

Organic information is available on Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's web-site at www.agric.gov.ab.ca. This includes addresses of certifying bodies. Other management related information is found at CFBMC's web-site: www.cfbmc.com .

Local Research & Demonstration Trials

By Roger Andreiuk, Cereal & Oilseed Crops Specialist, Leduc

Our office is involved in several research and demonstration plots. There is a set of plots on Dave Wedman's at the International Airport. Plot# 1 includes wheat varieties and fertility to maximize protein. Plot# 2 has barley varieties with varying fertilizer rates as well as alternate forages.

Directions:

Going west off HWY 2 towards International Airport, turn south on first road and one half mile down are plots.

Have a look at these and call me at 986-8985 if you have any questions.

Agriculture Financial Services Corporation
Insurance: 986-4088 Lending: 986-0999
Fax: 986-1085

Agriculture Financial Services Corporation

Insurance Division..... Val Hensch
Carol Ohrn
Karen Brenneis

Lending Division:..... Garry Poffenroth

Reminder ...

To ensure protection of your insurance coverage, please contact the District Office to report any carryover grain that you will have prior to this year's harvest.

Interest will be added to outstanding accounts, effective September 1st.

You are now required complete and return your Harvested Production Report within 10 days of completion of harvest.

If you have any questions, please give us a call.



Alberta Reduced Tillage Initiative
Phone: 980-4898 Cell: 940-8625 Fax: 986-1085

Fall Residue Management Critical to Direct Seed

By Mark Olson, Reduced Tillage Agronomist

Experienced direct seeders will often state "residue management begins and ends at the combine". Residue not spread properly creates seeding problems next spring such as hair pinning with disc type openers, plugging between sweeps of air seeders and drills, weed control problems, as well as, cooler soil temperatures and delayed crop emergence where piles are left undisturbed.

It is critical the combine being used is equipped with a proper straw and chaff spreader. Even and wide distribution of straw and chaff with a spreader that will work under the very worst conditions such as high moisture is a must. A good straw spreader will spread 70% or more, the width of cut. For chaff, 40% or more the width of cut is acceptable.

But what about the farmer who would like to direct seed next spring but has missed this opportunity? Should he forget about direct seeding for another year?

The answer is "yes" and "no". From a practical point of view, seeding fields with heavy crop residues, such as barley and wheat crops, could be an exercise in futility. If you only have barley and wheat fields and you haven't baled off the straw, it might be worth waiting until you have the proper equipment on the combine to spread residue next fall.

However, fields that had lower residue crops, ie. field pea or faster decomposing residues like canola and field pea, can be easy to direct seed into. The heavy harrow when used at high speeds (10 -12 mph) under hot dry conditions can aid in handling these crop residues. While it might not be the whole farm that is direct seeded in the first year, it's a start. As one farmer who I'm working with on making the switch to direct seeding recently said, "I will direct seed no field before its time." In other words, if the field is not prepared for direct seeding, then don't direct seed it.

For further information on direct seeding and reduced tillage or one of the events listed contact Mark Olson at (780)980-4898.

"I will direct seed no field before its time."

Dates to mark on your calendar for direct seeding information:

- "Innovator Conference For Farmers" in Vermilion, November 24 and 25/99
- "Southern Alberta Conservation Association" Conference in Lethbridge, November 30 and December 1/99
- "Direct Seeding Advantage For Industry" in Olds, December 14 and 15/99
- "AGRIFUTURE" in Red Deer, February 2, 3 & 4/00



National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
3 3286 51845005 7

Announcements

"Building Communities" Conference
Sept. 30 - Oct. 2, 1999
Capri Centre, Red Deer AB

Don't miss your opportunity to participate in Alberta's first community development conference where community leaders, groups, and volunteers can learn how to build their communities from the inside out. Dynamic speakers will address relevant topics in four streams:

- Getting Started in Community Development
- Skill Development
- Community Leadership
- Working in Partnership

Cindy has a small quantity of conference booklets in her office available for the asking. For more information contact the conference hosts, Alberta Community Development at (780)427-6182 (toll free 310-0000).

FARM & RANCH ACCOUNTING USING QUICKBOOKS
Level 1

January 5 – 6 – 7, 2000, 9am-4pm
Alberta Agriculture, Leduc District Office
- Chart of Accounts – GST Reporting –
- Financial Entries – Financial Statements –
and more...
For more information please call 986-8985.



HEE HAW...

A farmer purchases an old, run-down, abandoned farm with plans to turn it into a thriving enterprise. The fields are grown over with weeds, the farmhouse is falling apart, and the fences are collapsing all around.

During his first day of work, the town preacher stops by to bless the man's work, saying, "May you and God work together to make this the farm of your dreams!"

A few months later, the preacher stops by again to call on the farmer. Lo and behold, it's like a completely different place — the farm house is completely rebuilt and in excellent condition, there is plenty of cattle and other livestock happily munching on feed in well-fenced pens, and the fields are filled with crops planted in neat rows. "Amazing!" the preacher says. "Look what God and you have accomplished together!"

"Yes, reverend," says the farmer, "but remember what the farm looked like when God was working it alone!"

Leduc County
News & Reviews

The Leduc County Agricultural Committee has approved the **Fall Spray Program** for 1999 to control noxious weeds along private fencelines and headlands. The County will also continue with the existing program to control noxious weeds along right-of-ways adjacent to County roads.

Control work performed on fencelines and headlands adjacent to County roads will be done on a first come, first serve basis, at no charge. Fencelines and headlands which are not adjacent to County roads, will be subject to a minimum service charge of $50.00. **Landowners and adjacent landowners** must sign a release to have *Tordon 22K* sprayed along their fencelines and headlands for control of Canada Thistle, Common Tansy, and/or Scentless Chamomile (Mayweed). *Tordon 22K* is a residual herbicide with low toxicity which may persist in the soil for up to five years.

To register for the 1999 Fall Spray Program, please drop in to the Leduc County Agricultural Services office at 1103-5th Street, Nisku or call 955-3415 (1-800-379-9052) for more information.

Watch for our "Upcoming Events" flyer this fall!



CHECK IT OUT!

Alberta Agriculture's Home Page
www.agric.gov.ab.ca

Client computer available in our Leduc office.
Come by today!